

SAC Retreat Summary 2005 and Action Plan 2006
December 1 & 2, 2005
Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology at Coconut Island, Oahu

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I. Attendance

December 1, 2005

SAC Members: Cindy Barger, Andy Collins, Jim Coon, Liz Corbin, Bill Friedl, Tommy Friel, Dave Hoffman, Becky Hommon, Hank Janpol, Marc Lammers, Teri Leicher, Jerry Norris, Terry O'Halloran, Sara Peck, Dick Poirier, Jeanne Russell, Glenn Soma, Mike Stanton, Cheryl Sterling, Don Thornburg, Reg White, Michelle Yuen

Sanctuary Staff: Keeley Belva, Christine Brammer, Naomi McIntosh, Patty Miller, Jean Souza, Jeff Walters, Paul Wong, Justin Viezbicke

Guests: Kathy Bryant, Facilitator; Jo-Ann Leong, HIMB Director; Randy Kosaki, NWHICRER presentation; Hoku Johnson, NWHICRER Advisory Council Coordinator

December 2, 2005: Executive Committee Meeting

SAC Executive Committee: Terry O'Halloran, Chair; Jim Coon, Lou Herman, Marc Lammers (via telephone), Teri Leicher, Dick Poirier, Jeanne Russell, Don Thornburg, Reg White.

Sanctuary Staff: Keeley Belva, Naomi McIntosh, Jeff Walters

Guests: Kathy Bryant, Facilitator; Hoku Johnson, NWHIMS SAC Coordinator

II. SAC Pre-Retreat Planning Effort

Background

The SAC Retreat Planning Committee convened several pre-retreat conference calls to organize and prepare for the 2005 SAC retreat. The planning committee felt that many of the areas of focus for 2005 were still relevant and the need to spend SAC retreat time focused on that issue was not as necessary. The committee heard from the Sanctuary staff that the national program was initiating a benchmarking effort that would require the site to follow with their own set of benchmarks and performance measures. The committee reviewed the national benchmark document and the sanctuary's "Draft Sanctuary Issues" and felt that this was an important initiative that needed SAC discussion at the 2005 retreat. In addition, the Sanctuary had been interested in developing a closer working relationship with HIMB and was beginning to explore more opportunities for partnership. Partnerships have long been an interest of the SAC and this too was seen as an area of focus for the 2005 retreat. As such the planning committee moved forward with two main objectives: building partnerships and developing benchmarks.

Focus on building partnerships

The planning committee accepted an offer to hold the retreat on Coconut Island, home of the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB). The HIMB offered transportation and classroom facilities for the retreat. In addition they offered to provide tours of the research facilities and projects on the island. The Director of HIMB also was invited to give an overview of activities at HIMB and the potential opportunities for partnership moving forward. The planning committee also accepted an offer of a presentation and update on the

Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve (NWHICRER), which is proposed to be designated as a National Marine Sanctuary. The committee felt this would continue to be an important issue in the upcoming year and a discussion on how that effort was proceeding would be timely and beneficial. In addition to the protection of the resources, the committee was interested in the progress of their advisory council and what, if any, support the SAC could provide as the new council evolved.

Development of proposed benchmarks and organizational recommendations

The planning committee spent a good deal of preparation time reviewing the national program benchmarks, discussing the issue with staff, and reviewing the Sanctuary's document "Draft Sanctuary Issues" which lays the groundwork for developing benchmarks at the site level. The planning committee saw a real opportunity emerging by linking SAC standing committees to the Sanctuary Issue categories. The committee felt this would lend well to issue discussion and committee area of focus. The committee also took some time to prepare proposed SAC Performance Measures to share with the full SAC at the retreat. Finally, the committee discussed setting aside retreat time to continue the effort to strengthen the SAC organizational structure and developed recommendations for SAC discussion on quorum, decision-making, and committees. The pre-retreat effort allowed the committee to schedule a longer period of time for the SAC to visit the HIMB research facilities and programs and to learn more about the unique history of Coconut Island as part of the retreat experience.

III. SAC Retreat Summary

Overview of Retreat Objectives

The Retreat had three main objectives:

1. Focus on partnerships: Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve
2. Learn about and Develop Performance Measures for SAC
3. Continue to strengthen SAC organizational methods

Presentations

The SAC was fortunate to have four excellent presentations at the SAC Retreat. Each presentation provided the SAC with new and relevant information. The first was a presentation on a recent NOAA research trip to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, the second an overview on the current programs and future direction of the HIMB, the third an overview of the National Marine Sanctuaries Benchmark project and the sanctuary's response, and the last an update on the Sanctuary's projects and budget update for 2006. A summary of each presentation follows. Copies of the complete presentation are available at the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Sanctuary office.

Northwest Hawaiian Island Marine Sanctuary update

Randy Kosaki, Research Coordinator for NWHICRER, presented on the Reserves partnership with the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology to develop research programs focused on the NWHI that address Reserve management questions on ecological connectivity, ecosystem condition, and coral health. The HIMB researchers are attempting to answer these questions through genetic studies, implantation of acoustic tags in apex predators, and in situ studies of

coral health and disease. The goal of these research efforts is to produce results, which will support natural resource managers and insure that management decisions are based on a thorough understanding of these coral reef ecosystems.

Hawaii Institute for Marine Biology

Jo-Ann Leong, HIMB Director, gave a brief overview of the history of the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) and its plans for the future. The SAC members expressed their appreciation to Dr. Leong and her staff for hosting their annual retreat. Many stated how impressed they were with the research programs and that they looked forward to the tour later in the day. They stated that they were equally interested in working with HIMB and that they look forward to more opportunities like the Department of Education marine curriculum development project.

Humpback Whale Sanctuary Program Activities and Budget update

Naomi McIntosh provided a brief update on program efforts and the reduction of the budget in 2006. She discussed the program impacts with the reduction in funds, including that the SPLASH research program was not sufficiently funded.

SAC members were very concerned about the lack of funding for SPLASH. The idea that all the initial data collection would be complete but that there were not sufficient resources for analysis was very disheartening. The SAC felt that additional advocacy for those funds needed to take place.

Jeff Walters updated the SAC on the signage project at the harbors. He stated there had been some delays but that improvements to the signs have been made including larger print. They will be ready in January.

SAC members expressed frustration that the signs were not ready at the beginning of the season as had been discussed and felt that the information is needed now. Jeff committed to expediting the project. He did state that the old signs are still in the harbors. SAC members asked Jeff to let them know when delays occur, and perhaps they could assist him in moving the project along.

Naomi announced that Hawaii Institute for Marine Biology will be a partner in a new program funded through the effort of Senator Inouye. A new Department of Education (DOE) marine science curriculum will be developed and HIHWNMS staff will lead the project. The funding was just announced and this is a very exciting project. The SAC was very interested and excited about this initiative. They wanted more information when it becomes available.

National Marine Sanctuaries National Benchmarks

Naomi McIntosh briefly reviewed the National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS) Performance Measures dated March, 2005. She explained that the initiative was developed at the national level. The Director of NMS is strongly committed to the effort. Sanctuary staff have reviewed the matrix and provided feedback. She stressed that not all the performance measures will apply to each sanctuary, and demonstrating success in some areas will be difficult to assess. In response to the national effort the sanctuary has taken a proactive

approach and developed a Draft Sanctuary Issues paper to begin developing performance measures at the local sanctuary level. She added that she thought it was great that the SAC was considering their own performance measures and that the national program would be very interested in this effort as most likely no other SAC is considering this at this early stage.

SAC Performance Measures Discussion and Proposed Actions

Review of national program performance measures

SAC members were provided copies of the National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS) performance measures dated March 2005. The document is a matrix which provides 19 performance measures, each with a description, a timeframe and target, and distribution by program goal for each measure. The sanctuary staff had explained that the national performance measures were designed for all national programs and not all of them apply to the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS), but that they do provide a starting point for documenting progress in meeting the objectives of the sanctuary programs. The SAC briefly discussed the document and the national intent. SAC members were generally pleased to see the overall intent to develop performance measures, but they did express some concern about the time to manage the process and the relation to and impact on the individual sanctuaries. SAC representatives from federal agencies stated that this is the direction many federal agencies are moving in and that this is a way to better understand and justify budget expenditure. Given the overall federal budget and the cuts to many departments, justification of funds will be a huge part of each budget process. These measures will be important in that effort. Overall they felt this is an effort that they should watch and continue to have regular updates.

Review of Draft Sanctuary Issues and desire for alignment

The HIHWNMS staff provided a copy of and presentation on their "Draft Sanctuary Issues". This document was developed by the entire program staff to better organize the project efforts and prepare to develop performance measures. The staff explained that the program areas have been divided into four category areas: Reducing Threats to Sanctuary Resources, Understanding and Interpreting Humpback Whales and their Habitat, Increasing Awareness of Sanctuary Resources and Conservation Ethics, and Enhanced Management of the Sanctuary. Within each of these category areas the staff identified an area of focus, a desired outcome, strategies and activities to support that outcome. The staff stated that this is still a draft document and that they are continuing to refine it. It was also pointed out that the Management Plan Review will be taking place and this effort could feed into that review process.

The SAC response to the effort was very positive. Members of the SAC felt that the document was a very good effort at better organizing and documenting the work of the Sanctuary. They also felt that this process would assist the staff in developing the budget and more importantly justifying the need for additional resources if the desired outcomes could not be attained due to fiscal resource constraints. SAC members, particularly the SAC Chair, felt that this document provides a real opportunity to align the SAC standing committees with the four category areas. That there was a natural "fit" for each:

- Conservation Committee aligns with Reducing Threats to Sanctuary Resources
- Research Committee aligns with Understanding and Interpreting Humpback Whales and their Habitat,
- Education Committee aligns with Increasing Awareness of Sanctuary Resources and Conservation Ethics,
- Executive Committee aligns with Enhanced Management of the Sanctuary.

In this way, the committees would have a very clear understanding of the program areas of focus, the desired outcomes and methods to achieve that outcome. Committees would then be better able to provide input and feedback on these areas of focus on a timely and directed way. SAC members agreed that this was a good recommendation for the committees. Other SAC members indicated that while this a good idea, it does not prevent the committees from taking on an issue that might not be in the category areas. The SAC members agreed that the alignment idea is not to prohibit the committees from tackling an issue, and the program staff said that new issues would emerge all the time and the document should be seen as a fluid or evolving process as well.

Review proposed SAC benchmarks

The SAC Chair presented two proposed SAC performance measures for discussion. The planning committee had developed the three performance measures based on the one national measure that focused on the SAC, a measure for SAC commitment to the program and one for committees. The proposed SAC Performance Measures for 2006 are:

- 1. Annually, the Council will have at least 70% attendance for voting members at each meeting.**
- 2. Annually, the Council will provide significant input on a minimum of three priority issues as defined in the NMSP Performance Measure for Advisory Councils.**
 - a. “Significant” is defined as input that can be measured by a number of criteria, including a) passing a formal resolution; b) reaching consensus by vote; c) reaching consensus by discussion; d) dedication of three or more SAC meetings to a particular issue.**
 - b. A “priority issue” is defined as one that a) relates directly to a resource protection or resource management issue (as opposed to an operational or administrative issue); b) is identified in the AOP and site management plan as a priority issue for the site; or c) has been identified as such in the program’s annual budget guidance.**
- 3. By 2006, the Council will establish performance measures that align the Council committees, Sanctuary programs, and the NMSP performance measures.**

Jim Coon supported the performance measures and provided a brief overview of the Baldrige Method of tracking performance. He stated that Mr. Baldrige developed the method while serving as the US Secretary of Commerce, and it has been used successfully in public and private activities. He felt because of the connection to the federal government it might be a model to use or at least focus on for guidance. He emphasized that the process should not overtake the effort, but be a helpful tool in meeting program objectives. He added that perhaps at the annual SAC Chairs meeting this issue of performance measures might be an area to recommend for discussion. He also felt that funds may be available through the Baldrige Foundation to assist the SAC and Sanctuary in the process. He encouraged the SAC members to do some additional research and information gathering at the website: <http://www.quality.nist.gov/>

Overall, the SAC felt the recommendations were sound and achievable as a starting point for the process. The overwhelming issue of concern for the both the sanctuary staff and the SAC was that the process of documenting and tracking performance measures not consume much time. The effort should not be a “make work” exercise. If monitoring and documenting performance facilitates and improves sanctuary management and resource protection then it is worthwhile, if it just becomes paperwork it should not be pursued. The SAC also mentioned the need for baseline data for benchmarks. Whatever the SAC decides to monitor, baseline info will be required to measure performance.

Action: The SAC recommended putting the draft performance measures on the next agenda for action.

Action: The SAC requested that the Executive Committee follow-up on committee alignment and discuss with the chairs how best to move forward with performance measures

Action: The SAC requested that the Executive Committee conduct additional research on the Baldrige Method and also the idea of the annual Chair’s meeting having some discussion on performance measures

SAC Executive Committee Recommendations and Discussion

Committee alignment and issues of focus

The SAC discussed how to implement the alignment of the standing committees with the areas of focus for the sanctuary. They felt the idea was a good one and presented a lot of opportunities to focus and direct the committees. The SAC felt that monthly updates to the relevant committees on staff activities within each category area would be helpful. The SAC also felt that budget updates would be very valuable especially as the budget is reduced. How is the program doing meeting the objectives with less money? What is being cut or impacted? If programs need to be cut how will that decision be made? Etc. This information would be very valuable to the committee in formulating recommendations. The SAC felt the Executive Committee should follow-up this discussion at their meeting on Dec. 2 to fine tune the process.

Conclude Working Group on Whale Vessel Interaction

The Executive Committee felt that it was time to thank the Whale Vessel Interaction Working Group and move the issue into the Conservation Committee. They stated that a working group is designed to have short term focus on an issue, conduct necessary information gathering, formulate a recommendation and be done. In this case the working group has worked for more

than two years and their effort and services need to be acknowledged. More importantly it is an issue that will be with the SAC indefinitely and as such needs to be the focus of committee work not a working group. The SAC members agreed that the working group has worked very hard and that it should be recognized and that the move to the committee is a sound recommendation.

SAC Quorum and Decision Making

The SAC did not have quorum at the last meeting and an issue up for action could not be addressed. The Executive Committee discussed several potential recommendations for addressing the quorum issue.

- amending the charter to create a protocol for missed meetings (miss two meetings a year and removed or moved to non-voting status)
- use video conferencing for decision making
- better update and notify backups

The SAC discussed all these options. Foremost, the group felt that perhaps the last meeting was a one-time situation since quorum has always been met. However, they did feel that SAC members need to really commit to being on the SAC and making the time. Video conferencing is available and could be used, but should really be considered as a last resort. Physical participation is still far better and the SAC does not meet that frequently that effort should be made. Finally, having a strong and knowledgeable back-up is really important and each member should reassess their situation. Some members do not have one and that needs to be addressed. For now, the SAC felt that each member should really make the effort and no immediate recommendations to amend the charter should be considered.

SAC membership review

The Executive Committee noted that the composition of the SAC has not been reviewed since the Sanctuary was founded. It is possible that changes over time have contributed to the difficulty in finding members to fill certain seats or waning interest from some groups. The Committee recommended that SAC consider a review of the composition to decide if any changes need to be made and what the process would be.

SAC members acknowledged since the composition had not been reviewed it would be worth a review. The most contentious issue discussed was the voting or non-voting of government agencies. This issue is particular sensitive to a few members of the SAC—each holding strong feelings as to whether or not federal and state agencies should be voting members. Members also mentioned that some seats have strong alternates and others very little and that can be a challenge. Other issues raised was the need to review the geographic distribution of membership, overlap of membership with NWHICRER, and a review of other sanctuary SACs for comparison.

Upon a quick review of the composition, the SAC requested that the Executive Committee tackle the issue and develop a recommendation on how to proceed.

Clarify protocol for SAC letters

The Chair felt that there are times when the letter writing process has become unnecessarily burdensome and not timely. He wanted to clarify the process so that the Chair or committee

chair can send out letters that do not state a position or advocate a position, but rather seek information or clarification. He cited a letter that has been waiting several months to gain approval before being sent out. SAC members felt that letters only seeking information or thanking an individual or group for information should not require the approval from the council and the chair should have some discretion. However, they were very clear that no letter may be sent stating a position or advocating a position prior to SAC action and approval in a publicly noticed meeting.

Areas of Focus 2006

The SAC mentioned a few key issues in addition to those already identified in the AOF 2005:

- Following up on the signage project to insure timely completion and the need for education for kayakers (stickers)
- Budget advocacy at the state and national level to complete Kihei building project, restore funds to SPLASH, and support the curriculum project.
- Management Plan Review and Performance Measure process

Actions:

- **The SAC recommended that the Executive Committee discuss committee alignment and how the staff will work with the committees in 2006**
- **The SAC recommended that the Executive Committee develop a process for reviewing the SAC composition and present their recommendations at a future meeting**
- **The SAC recommended that at the next SAC meeting a brief summary be provided to the public clarifying letter writing protocol. Letters requesting information, acknowledging receipt of information, or thanking individuals or groups may be sent out by the SAC Chair or committee chair without the review and consent of the SAC. Any letter stating a position of the SAC cannot be sent until formal action has been taken by SAC at a regularly scheduled and noticed meeting.**
- **The SAC recommends that at the next SAC meeting the Whale Vessel Interaction Working Group be thanked for their good work and the issue be tasked to the Conservation Committee.**
- **The SAC recommends that the budget issue, particularly the impact the SPLASH program, be on the next agenda for discussion and action**
- **The SAC requests that the next agenda include any update on the DOE marine curriculum project and the SAC express their support for that effort**

IV. Adjournment and Retreat Wrap-up

Following the morning discussion the SAC was given a brief tour of the island and some of the research activities. The formal retreat was adjourned at 2:45 pm. A more in-depth tour and discussion was provided after the meeting adjourned in the afternoon. The SAC

reconvened at Bayview Golf Club, Kaneohe for a public meeting at 5:00 pm followed by a reception.

V. SAC Executive Committee Summary and Proposed Action Items

The Executive Committee convened on December 2 at 9:00 am at the Sanctuary office in Hawaii Kai.

Committee alignment and staff liaisons

The Executive Committee developed the following process and committee alignments for recommendation after much discussion:

1. Committees will align with the category areas in the Sanctuary Plan. Regular updates on the subject areas should be provided by the staff with specific requests for input given to the committee at that time
2. Keeley Belva, Council Coordinator, will be the point of contact for all committees.
3. Keeley will provide committee support: set-up conference call, document meeting, assist in agenda setting and taking minutes
4. Keeley will communicate questions or request for info from the committees to the appropriate staff for the committees and follow up with their response
5. Keeley will work with the staff to gather monthly updates to send to the committees
6. Committee Chairs will schedule meetings out for the year or several months (better to have a fixed schedule and cancel then set randomly)
7. Committee Chairs will not hold meetings if there is not an issue to be discussed
8. Committees will develop motions/policy recommendations for SAC action in WRITING prior to SAC meetings and disseminate in advance
9. Committee/Working Group changes:
 - Whale Vessel Interaction Working Club: thanked and the issue referred to Conservation Committee
 - Change Committee: thanked and subject matter folded into Executive Committee
10. Communication methods:
 - Monthly updates
 - website to be updated
 - "Situation Report" disseminated to Committee Chairs

SAC Membership review and quorum

The Executive Committee felt this would be one of their primary AOF for 2006. The committee decided to form a sub-committee to conduct some initial research and report back to the Executive Committee and full SAC. The committee will review the history of SAC, absentee rate, voting members, other sanctuary composition and alternates. The committee will be Sara, Dick, Teri and Terry O'Halloran.

2006 budget impacts

Naomi stated that the program would face a 16% budget cut in 2006. She is looking at where the cuts will take place. She stated that the focus is on the whales and how the program best meets resource protection needs.

The Executive Committee felt that the State's FY07 budget (currently under consideration by the State Legislature) presented an opportunity to possibly get some extra funds. The governor among others will be going to the NWHICRER later in December and following

that trip the SAC should send a letter updating her on the efforts of the whale sanctuary. Jeff was requested to list any budget needs he sees that could support the program. Terry, Reg, Jim, and Dick would work on an advocacy strategy for the state legislature. The committee requested a more in depth budget presentation for the January meeting.

Chairs Meeting Issues

The Executive Committee considered the following recommendations for discussion topics:

- Performance measures
- Partnerships
- Marine Education Curriculum

The format is a little different this year. Chairs do not have to give a presentation, but if time is allocated these are the potential topics for consideration.

January SAC Meeting agenda

The Executive Committee wanted to invite the National Marine Sanctuary Program Director to attend the January meeting and discuss performance measures. If he able to attend, time would allocated accordingly.

The agenda order for January would be action items/decision making, presentations and issue discussion, committee updates, and other business

Issues for Jan. agenda:

- Budget presentation
- Chairs Meeting
- NOAA Fisheries
- Update on the signs and stickers for kayaks, letter by Jeff Walters
- Legislative Action
- Committee Reports
- Committee Meeting Schedule
- Status Report on Letters
- Report on the SAC Composition committee
- Update on DOE marine curriculum project

Action:

1. Adoption of recommendations for committee alignment developed at Retreat
2. Adoption of SAC performance measures recommended at Retreat
3. Adoption of Working Group/Committee changes recommended at Retreat
4. Clarification of letter writing policy